

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION: THE WAY FOR THE WORLD TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD

(82)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Romans 3:21-5:21](#)

(Continuation from 11/05/17)

A. Righteousness: The Way to be Right With God, [Romans 3:21-26](#)

[Romans 3:21-26 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ “But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;*
²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

[\(Romans 3:21-26\)](#) Introduction— Righteousness: the “righteousness of God” is used in three ways in Scripture.

1. Righteousness means God’s character. It means the righteousness, justice, and perfection which God Himself possesses and shows.
2. Righteousness refers to man’s lack of godly character. It means the sinful, depraved, unrighteous, unjust, and imperfect nature and behavior of man.
3. Righteousness means the righteousness, that is, the perfection which God provides for man in Christ Jesus. When a man allows the Lord Jesus Christ to take his sins, he is given the righteousness of God. Christ robes the man in the righteousness of God Himself—by faith ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Philippians 3:9](#)).

[2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

[Philippians 3:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ “And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

1. Righteousness is now revealed (v.21-22).
2. Righteousness is for everyone (v.22-23).
3. Righteousness is only possible through justification (v.24).
4. Righteousness is by an act of God alone: by propitiation (v.25).
5. Righteousness has one purpose: to proclaim God's personal righteousness (v.25-26).

11-12-17

Series: The Book of Romans

Job asked the most important question it is possible to ask: **“In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God?”** ([Job 9:2 NASB](#)).

He then said,

[Job 9:3-20 \(NASB\)](#)

³“If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*.

⁴Wise in heart and mighty in strength, Who has defied Him without harm?

⁵*It is God* who removes the mountains, they know not *how*, When He overturns them in His anger;

⁶Who shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble;

⁷Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars;

⁸Who alone stretches out the heavens And tramples down the waves of the sea;

⁹Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south;

¹⁰Who does great things, unfathomable, And wondrous works without number.

¹¹Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him; Were He to move past *me*, I would not perceive Him.

¹²Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, 'What are You doing?'

¹³God will not turn back His anger; Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab.

¹⁴How then can I answer Him, *And* choose my words before Him?

¹⁵For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge.

¹⁶If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.

¹⁷For He bruises me with a tempest And multiplies my wounds without cause.

¹⁸He will not allow me to get my breath, But saturates me with bitterness.

¹⁹If *it is a matter* of power, behold, *He is* the strong one! And if *it is a matter* of justice, who can summon Him?

²⁰Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.”

Because God is the kind of God He is, Job wondered how a person could ever hope to approach Him, much less become right and acceptable before Him. Can a mere human being have a right relationship with a God who is perfectly holy, infinite, and mighty?

Bildad echoed Job’s question, saying,

[Job 25:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“**How then can a man be just with God?** Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?”

Upon hearing John the Baptist’s fearful warnings about God’s judgment, **“the crowds (multitudes) were questioning him, saying, ‘Then what shall we do?’”** ([Luke 3:10 NASB](#)).

The crowd that Jesus had miraculously fed the day before asked Him, **“What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”** ([John 6:27-28 NASB](#)).

11-12-17

Series: The Book of Romans

John 6:27-28 (NASB)

²⁷ “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.
²⁸ Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?”

The rich young ruler asked Jesus, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” ([Matthew 19:16 NASB](#)).

Matthew 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”

After hearing Peter’s sobering message at Pentecost, some of the listeners said to him “and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’” ([Acts 2:37 NASB](#)).

Acts 2:37-38 (NASB)

³⁷ “Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

As he lay blinded on the road to Damascus, Saul cried out to Jesus, “What shall I do, Lord?” ([Acts 22:10 NASB](#)).

Acts 22:6-10 (NASB)

⁶ “But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,

⁷ and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’

⁸ And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’

⁹ And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’”

The Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ([Acts 16:30 NASB](#)).

Acts 16:25-30 (NASB)

²⁵ “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

²⁶ and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.

²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!”

11-12-17

Series: [The Book of Romans](#)

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Throughout history men have asked much the same questions as did Job and the others. The very reason that religion is so universally common to mankind reflects man's attempts to answer such questions. As noted before, people cannot escape feelings of guilt, not only for doing things they know are wrong but for being the way they are.

Man's sense of lostness, loneliness, emptiness, and meaninglessness is reflected in the literature and archaeological remains of every civilization. So are his fear of death, of existence, if any, beyond the grave, and of divine punishment. Nearly every religion is a response to those fears and seeks to offer a way of reaching and satisfying deity. But every religion except Christianity is man-made and works-centered, and for that reason, none of them can succeed in leading a person to God.

Scripture makes clear that there is indeed a way to God, but that it is not based on anything men themselves can do to achieve or merit it. Man can be made right with God, but not on his own terms or in his own power. In that basic regard Christianity is distinct from every other religion. As far as the way of salvation is concerned, there are therefore only two religions the world has ever known or will ever know—the **religion of divine accomplishment**, which is biblical Christianity, and the **religion of human achievement**, which includes all other kinds of religion, by whatever names they may go under.

When threatened by the fierce and powerful Babylonians, the people of Judah asked Jeremiah to intercede for them before God, **"that the Lord your God may tell us the way in which we should walk and the thing that we should do."**

To reinforce their seeming sincerity, they then **"said to Jeremiah, 'May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us, if we do not act in accordance with the whole message with which the Lord your God will send you to us. Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to the voice of the Lord our God.'"** But when Jeremiah brought them God's answer, which was to stay in their own land and trust Him to save them, they rejected His word and went to Egypt ([Jeremiah 42:1-43:7](#)).

Their response is typical of a myriad of people who ask how to get right with God. They seem very sincere, but when they hear about the true and only way, which is through trust in Jesus Christ, they are unwilling to comply. Their response makes it evident that they are seeking salvation on their own terms, not God's.

All men are equally incapable of coming to God in their own power. They can be saved only by the provision of God's grace. Since Adam and Eve fell, faith responding to the offer of God's grace has always been the only means of salvation, of providing a right relationship to God. Man cannot be saved even by God's own divine law given through Moses.

11-12-17

Series: The Book of Romans

That law was never, under any covenant or dispensation, a means of salvation. Its purpose was to show how impossible it is to measure up to God's standards by human effort. The moral standards commanded, and the ceremonies prescribed in the Mosaic covenant were never intended and were never able to save. A sincere desire to obey the law and a proper observance of the rituals were pleasing to God, but only as they reflected faith in Him.

One of the major and repeated themes of the book of Romans is righteousness. As mentioned before, the common Greek root behind *righteousness*, *justification*, and their various verb and adjectival forms is found more than sixty times in Romans. The present passage ([Romans 3:21-25a](#)) is one of many in the epistle that focus on God's righteousness, by which all righteousness is measured.

The only righteousness man possesses or attains within himself is unrighteousness, because that is the character and substance of his fallen nature. Man's "**righteous deeds**," Isaiah declares, "**are like a filthy garment**," referring to a menstrual cloth ([Isaiah 64:6 NASB](#)).

[Isaiah 64:6 \(NASB\)](#)

6 "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

The light of righteousness comes only from above. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied of Jesus that He would be "**the Sunrise from on high [who] shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death**" ([Luke 1:78-79](#)).

[Luke 1:78-79 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷⁸ "**Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,**

⁷⁹ **TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.**"

As the godly Simeon held the infant Jesus in his arms, he declared, ³⁰ "**For my eyes have seen Your salvation,** ³¹ **Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,** ³² **A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.**" ([Luke 2:30-32 NASB](#)).

John describes the Lord Jesus Christ as "**...the true Light which, coming into the world enlightens every man**" ([John 1:9 NASB](#)). Jesus Christ was God incarnate, bringing in His own self the light of salvation to the world.

Ancient Greek and Roman poets loved to write overly dramatic tragedies in which the hero or heroine was rescued from impossible situations by the last-minute intervention of a **god (the *deus ex machina* literary device)**. However; the more reputable among them opted not to bring a god onto the stage unless the problem were one that deserved a god to solve it.

The supreme human tragedy is man's sin, and only the true God can solve it. Only the perfectly righteous God Himself can provide the righteousness that men need to be acceptable to Him.

11-12-17

Series: The Book of Romans

God's righteousness is different from all other kinds of righteousness in many ways. **First** of all, it is different because of its *source*, which is God Himself. **"Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it"** ([Isaiah 45:8 NASB](#)).

Second, God's righteousness is different in *essence*. It is a comprehensive righteousness that fulfills both the precept and the penalty of God's law, under which all men stand judged. The precept of God's law is the perfect fulfillment of it, in other words sinless perfection, which only the man Christ Jesus has ever fulfilled. He kept every requirement of God's law without even the most minute deviation or shortcoming. Although He endured every temptation to which man is subject, He was completely without sin ([Hebrews 4:15](#)).

[Hebrews 4:15 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁵ **"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin."**

Yet, in order to fulfill the penalty of the law for sinful mankind, God **"[He] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"** ([2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB](#)). **"And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed"** ([1 Peter 2:24 NASB](#); cf. [Hebrews 9:28](#)).

[Hebrews 9:28 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸ **"So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him."**

Third, God's righteousness is unique in its *duration*. His righteousness is everlasting righteousness, existing from eternity to eternity. Throughout Scripture His righteousness is referred to as everlasting (see, e.g., [Psalm 119:142](#); [Isaiah 51:8](#); [Daniel 9:24](#)). The person, therefore, who receives God's righteousness receives everlasting righteousness.

[Psalm 119:142 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴² **"Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth."**

[Isaiah 51:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ **"For the moth will eat them like a garment, And the grub will eat them like wool. But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation to all generations."**

[Daniel 9:24 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴ **"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."**

In the *Iliad* of Homer, the great Trojan warrior Hector was preparing to fight Achilles and the invading Greeks. As he was about to leave home, Hector wanted to hold his young son Astyanax in his arms and bid him farewell for what ended up being the last time. But Hector's armor so frightened the infant that he shrank back to his nurse's caress. The father, laughing out loud, then

11-12-17

Series: The Book of Romans

removed his bronze helmet and took up his little child in his arms. The boy discovered the father of his love behind all that armor.

That is akin to what Paul does in his letter to the Romans, beginning with [Romans 3:21](#). After having shown God the judge and executioner; as it were, he now shows the God of love, who reaches out His arms to sinful men in the hope that they will come to Him and be saved.

Romans 3:21 (NASB)

²¹ **“But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”**

In [Romans 3:21-25a](#) Paul gives seven additional elements of the righteousness that God divinely imparts to those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is **apart from legalism (v. 21a)**, **built on revelation (v. 21b)**, **acquired by faith (v. 22a)**, **provided for all (vv. 22b-23)**, **given freely through grace (v. 24a)**, **accomplished by redemption (v. 24b)**, and **paid for by atoning sacrifice (v 25a)**.